
CIRM Board Approves Two Additional COVID-19 Projects

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Oakland, CA – Today the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) approved two additional projects as part of the \$5 million in emergency funding for COVID-19 related projects. This brings the number of projects CIRM is supporting to 11, including two clinical trials.

The Board awarded \$349,999 to Dr. Vaithilingaraja Arumugaswami at UCLA. The focus of this project will be to study Berzosertib, a therapy targeting viral replication and damage in lung stem cells. The ultimate goal would be to use this agent as a therapy to prevent COVID-19 viral replication in the lungs, thereby reducing lung injury, inflammation, and subsequent lung disease caused by the virus.

This award is part of CIRM's Translational Stage Research Program (TRAN1), which promotes the activities necessary for advancement to clinical study of a potential therapy.

The Board also awarded \$149,916 to Dr. Song Li at UCLA. This project will focus on developing an injectable biomaterial that can induce the formation of T memory stem cells (TMSCs), an important type of stem cell that plays a critical role in generating an immune response to combat viruses. In vaccine development, there is a major challenge that the elderly may not be able to mount a strong enough immunity. This innovative approach seeks to address this challenge by increasing TMSCs in order to boost the immune response to vaccines against COVID-19.

This award is under CIRM's Discovery Stage Research Program (DISC2), which promotes promising new technologies that could be translated to enable broad use and improve patient care.

"CIRM continues to support novel COVID-19 projects that build on previous knowledge acquired," says Dr. Maria T. Millan, the President & CEO of CIRM. "These two projects represent the much-needed multi-pronged approach to the COVID-19 crisis, one addressing the need for effective vaccines to prevent disease and the other to treat the severe illness resulting from infection."

About CIRM

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information go to www.cirm.ca.gov

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